# The Norwegian Braille Authority

# Annual Report 2024

## Administration

First of all, I have to tell you that Oddvar Øyan and Dawn Renouf Bjørneby have left the Norwegian Braille Authority this year. In stead of them Arnt Holte and Tanita Thomassen have come in. They are appointed together with the rest of us by our steering ministry, which is the Ministry of Culture and Equality. The Braille Authority has a term of office of four years, and the members are appointed accordingly. This year, a new appointment has taken place, and so two new members came in, two left, and eight of us remained.

As mentioned last year, our provider of administrative services, the Library of Talking Books and Braille, was incorporated into the National Library of Norway in July 2023. As a result of that, our administrative services also were taken over by that institution. This has had some practical consequences, and the most serious one has been that we did not receive any earmarked allocation for 2024. We were simply included in the large allocation to the National Library. We could not live with that uncertainty, so we wrote a letter to the Ministry of Culture and Equality and asked them to clarify our financial framework for the current year and the years to come. We also pointed out that it would be natural to receive earmarked funds in the allocation to the National library in the same way as we previously did through the allocation to the Library of Talking Books and braille. The ministry answered that they had noticed our need for a clearer communication of the economic framework in the future. Hopefully, that will lead to earmarked funds next year.

This year we have had a group working hard with the development of our new website. The first step on that road was to change the host of it. The choice fell on an online provider called DSS websites, which is hosted by the Norwegian government. There we could publish our documents in wished accessible formats in an editor accessible to screen readers. It was not, however, possible to move our standards and reports automatically, so a lot of work had to be done to move them manually. We even had to hire a person to do some of the work for us. We also had to do some testing to see if the content of the website satisfied the requirements in the accessibility statement on it. In June all this was done, and the new website with the national Coat of arms on it was launched on 12th June 2024. You will find it here:

[www.punktskriftutvalget.no](http://www.punktskriftutvalget.no)

## Standardization work

Our standardisation work goes on in different working groups. They mostly consist of members from the Braille Authority, but they also include experts elsewhere from. We have four working groups at the time: the teaching material group, the knitting pattern group, the mathematic group, and the 8-dot braille group.

First, however, I have to say something about a working group we had in 2022. This group worked on the representation of emojis in braille, and they recommended then that the emojis should be written as text with dots 25 before and after. If more than one emoji of the same kind occurs consecutively, the text of it should be written only once, and then the number of it should be entered immediately after the last dot-25-sign. In 2022 we agreed to test this for a while before we made a final decision. Early this year, however, we thought that the test period had lasted long enough, and so we decided to use the recommended emoji writing from 2022 as standard.

The teaching material group is currently working on a comprehensive revision of a teaching material the Braille Authority published in 2006. The textbook is called “Lær punktskrift – KORT OG GODT” (Learning Braille – SHORT AND SWEET) and is meant for adults who want to study braille on their own. The textbook takes the students through both contracted and uncontracted braille, and consists of both braille volumes and an auditive guidance. Ida and Hans Anton will give a more detailed presentation of it later today.

The knitting pattern group is working on a braille notation of knitting patterns. The group started their work in august this year, and fortunately it did not need to start from scratch. In the late 1990s the Braille Authority had a group working on developing a knitting notation system, and this again was built on established practice in the braille magazines over a long time. The group did even almost finish the work, but for one reason or other they never completed it. Now 25 years later we are aiming both to revise and finish the work, and fortunately, one of the members of the current group also was a member of the previous one, so at least the continuity is ensured. The first we have to do, is to do some testing of the symbols’ legibility, and choose the most readable ones.

The mathematic group is concerned with the implementation of MathCAT in the production of mathematics in the National Library and especially with the possibility of producing mathematics in braille. They also have taken part in the Nordic STEM group established after the Nordic meeting last year, and there MathCAT is on the agenda too. It will be interesting to see what is coming out of it in the years to come.

In the 8-dot braille group I know there is discussions going on about braille fonts in Unicode for sighted people, and Lars will tell us more about that tomorrow.

## Events

On the 16tk November 2023 we arranged a national braille conference called “Reading braille effectively”. The following presentation were held:

* "Let me share experiences and thoughts about the teaching of braille reading with you." Oliv Klingenberg, PhD in visual pedagogy.
* "How we perceive braille characters - three strategies for recognition." Torø Graven, PhD in visual pedagogy.
* "Tips and tricks to increase your reading speed." Eirin Frøyland, braille teacher.
* "My way to my written language." Mette Midtseter, braille user.
* "Reading- and work techniques when using braille display, screen reader and PC." Oddvar Øyan, OUP.
* "Which braille table is the most user-friendly one when reading on a braille display?" Lars Bjørndal and Hans Anton Ålien, OUP.

Both the Braille Authority and the audience seemed to be quite satisfied with the conference. There were about fifty people in the auditorium, but the conference was streamed, so many more followed it. exactly how many we do not know.

This year we have decided to have no braille conference at all, but we have a group working on preparing for the conference next year. 2025 is the 200th anniversary of the completion of the braille system, and that must be celebrated in one way or other. We must try to come up with something amazing, but so far we have not decided what that will be. We will tell you about it next year.